RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM C. SCHNORR

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. William C. Schnorr on August 28, 2003, in Mountainside, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Jared Kosch: Jared Kosch.

SI: Mr. Schnorr, thank you very much for having us here today and for participating in the project.

William Schnorr: It's a pleasure.

SI: To begin, would you tell us a little bit about your father who was born in Germany? Do you know, roughly, when he was born and what part of Germany he was from?

WS: I do. He was born in, I don't know the exact date, but it was, like, 1890 and it was in a city called (Brig?), which later was changed, because it became the eastern part of Germany, after World War II. So, it was occupied by the Russians, at that point, and they changed the name of the city and that's about all I really know about it. I never visited there or anything.

SI: How old was he when he immigrated to the United States?

WS: He was about twenty or twenty-one; before World War I, he immigrated.

SI: Did he come over by himself?

WS: He came over by himself. He first went to France for a while and he was a gentleman that sort of enjoyed being a linguist, with various languages. Even after he came over here and learned English, he went to a Spanish boarding house and stayed there for a while and I guess that's about it.

SI: Did you ever discuss with him the reasons why he left?

WS: Well, he left because he was offered a job over here. He had been working with a chemical company in Germany and they had, also, a place in the US. It was Consolidated Color and Chemical, at the time, and one of his bosses said that, if you ever wanted to come to the United States, they'd give him a position.

SI: Was he working as an accountant at that point?

WS: Yes, yes, basically. Well, with them, he was sort of an office manager and an accountant.

SI: Did he have any family in the United States?

WS: No. He had a very distant uncle, I think, but I never heard much about him or anything, but I think he had a distant uncle.

SI: Can you tell us about your mother's side of the family? They were New Jersey natives.

WS: Yes, but her heritage was Danish and she was born here, in the United States, but her parents were Danish.

SI: Her parents were born in …

WS: In Denmark, yes.

SI: Do you know anything about their family history?

WS: No, very little. To expand on that, I'd have to call my sister. [laughter] She's pretty good about what all that background was.

SI: What was her family doing in New Jersey?

WS: … I don't know what her mother and father did at all and she left school very early. She didn't go through high school or anything and she had one sister and one brother and, in those days, you know, you didn't get a college education or anything. … She was a waitress at Bamberger's in Newark and that's, as far as I know, the only job she ever had.

SI: Do you know how your parents met?

WS: They met through mutual friends.

SI: Where were they living at the time, in Newark?

WS: Newark, yes.

SI: Your father was in the United States during the World War I era. Did he ever talk about that time, particularly, what it was like being a German immigrant?

WS: A little bit, yes. There were a couple of, I guess, just rather difficult things, you know, because he, obviously, had an accent … and people were down on the German people, because of the war, and most everybody resented the Germans a little bit. So, I guess he went through some times like that. He didn't have his citizenship yet. He didn't get that until, I think, 1920.

SI: Was he concerned about being drafted?

WS: No, because he had had a very badly sprained foot and he had an ankle that was … sort of deformed. He walked with a very slight limp, … not bad, but he couldn't have been in the service. They would have rejected him, I'm pretty sure.

SI: Do you know where in Newark they were living at the time?

WS: No, I don't; I don't really.

SI: Okay. I was just wondering if they were part of a German community there.

WS: I really don't know.

SI: You only have one sister.

WS: One sister.

SI: Is she older or younger?

WS: She's four years younger. She lives in Indiana.

SI: Did your father continue to work for Consolidated Color and Chemical?

WS: Yes, but they sold out and, eventually, it went to American Cyanamid. He went to American Cyanamid for a while, and then, he went to General Aniline, and that's where he retired from, and I think his pension, at the time, was thirty-two dollars a month. [laughter] Of course, the prices of everything were different, too.

SI: Your mother basically worked in the home while you were growing up.

WS: All the time. She never worked after they were married, yes, which was the very common thing. Most of the women didn't, at that point.

SI: You were born in Newark. How long did your family live in Newark after you were born? Where did you grow up?

WS: I was only a couple of years old when we moved to Roselle Park and I went all through school at Roselle Park, through high school and so forth.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about what it was like to grow up in Roselle Park in the 1920s and 1930s?

WS: It was a great town. That was really a town where everyone … was very compatible. You never seemed to have hardly any crime or anything and you knew your neighbors. You seldom locked your door or anything and I had a lot of good buddies and the school system was good. I went to a grade school right near my house, on Sherman Avenue there, Sherman Avenue School, I think it was, and then, we went up on the other end of town to go junior high school and high school, and it was a real great town. … I played sports in high school and enjoyed the whole time.

JK: Did you live on East Grant?

WS: No, we lived on Magie Avenue, which goes off to, are you familiar with that?

JK: I also grew up in Roselle Park.

WS: Yes. Do you know where Magie Avenue is? … Where did you live?

JK: On East Grant Avenue.

WS: Oh.

JK: Very close to Magie, actually, right by the corner. Magie intersects with East Grant.

WS: Yes.

JK: I was at 151, which is very close to the corner. I do not want to get too off topic. [laughter]

WS: Go ahead. You can cut that out, okay. [laughter]

SI: Was Roselle Park a working class neighborhood, a middle class neighborhood; how would you characterize it?

WS: You would characterize it, generally, as a middle class neighborhood, I think. Most of the houses were fairly new. There was still an area, down the eastern end of town, that wasn't developed yet. It was called Bender's Field. There was a lot of fields there and we used to play ball there and everything. … They even had some cattle at that time and they had a butcher shop right there. …

JK: There were some grazing lands.

WS: Yes, there were some grazing lands in that area there, down close to where Elmora is now, in that area.

SI: Did many of the men your father's age commute to New York and Newark?

WS: Yes, basically to Newark and New York, yes.

SI: It was a bedroom community.

WS: See, he worked in Newark, at that time, and he took the train into Newark.

SI: How did the Great Depression affect both your family and Roselle Park?

WS: Very seriously. There was a lot of unemployment and my father was unemployed for a period of time, maybe a year-and-a-half or two years, and we really had to scrounge for money. I did about every job possible. I was a caddy, I delivered newspapers, I worked for a grocery store. I even sold soap flakes, which … [was, I] just went house-to-house, … selling soap flakes and things like that. So, we really, you know, had to make an effort to make a little money, to add to whatever we had. … Of course, there was no unemployment insurance or anything at that time. So, it wasn't like present day, where, if you're out of work, you get a check for six or eight

months, I don't know what it is, but, you know, something to tide you over. That wasn't possible then.

SI: Were your father's hours ever cut back or did he ever lose his job?

WS: Yes, that's what I said, he was out of work. He was out of work for a period of time, I don't know, maybe a year-and-a-half or two.

SI: Did the same company rehire him?

WS: No, no. That's when he went from Consolidated. Yes, that company closed and he went with another company, American Cyanamid, I believe.

SI: What can you tell us about your neighbors in Roselle Park?

WS: Great people. Everybody seemed to get along well and the parents, you know, did various things together and all the kids played together and we did … a lot of things as families.

SI: In terms of the make up of the community, were there many first-generation Americans?

WS: … No. It was pretty general, I would think, you know, not just first-generation Americans. As a matter-of-fact, right in our neighborhood there, I think, we were maybe the only ones that were first-generation. The rest, you know, had a background of a few generations and, in general, that's what it was, even when I got to high school. There was one area of town that were, maybe, more first-generation. It was down [in] the Aldene section, where there's more Italian people, and they were more first-generation, but, other than that, the rest of the town was pretty much a mixture and not first-generation.

JK: Do you remember what the dominant religious affiliation was? I am sure it was Christian, but …

WS: It was Protestant, yes, basically, on our end of town. On the other end of town, it was Catholic.

SI: What role did the church play in your life as a child? Was it the center of activity?

WS: … It was important. We went to church every Sunday. First, we went to church in Elizabeth, at the Third Presbyterian Church, and then, we went to the one in Roselle Park. It wasn't Presbyterian, but it was Protestant, on the corner of Chestnut and Grant Avenue there, still there.

JK: The Methodist Church?

WS: Yes, it's Methodist now, I guess, or is it non-denominational?

JK: Was it Methodist then? It is Methodist now.

WS: … Is it non-denominational or Methodist now? …

JK: I think it is Methodist.

WS: Maybe it still is, yes.

JK: Was it also Methodist when you went there?

WS: Yes.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit more about your education? What were your favorite subjects in school? What were you focused on?

WS: Well, I guess my favorite subject would have to have been history and geometry. I mean, I kind of enjoyed them more and geography, I liked geography, I liked that sort of thing. Geometry, I didn't do too well in, but I enjoyed doing it, and, after I graduated from school, I guess you just want me to progress on with that, after I graduated from high school? I got a job in New York City as, well, I guess you'd probably call it, more or less, an office boy, and the salary, as I recall, was sixty-five dollars a month, [laughter] commuted to New York and gave my mother five dollars a week for room and board and still had some money to do a few things on my own.

JK: When you were in high school, you were not thinking about college.

WS: Oh, we didn't have any [hope]; I didn't have any possibility. I had an athletic background in high school, but not enough to get a scholarship, and they weren't giving out scholarships then, like they do now. … It wasn't a big deal, like now, … as you well know, and all the colleges and all the sports, there's so many scholarships. That wasn't so in those days.

SI: Which sports did you play in high school?

WS: I played basketball, baseball and track.

SI: Which was your favorite?

WS: Basketball was my favorite, yes. I liked basketball best.

SI: What year did you graduate from high school?

WS: '37.

SI: You were working. I am just trying to get a feel for what you did between the end of high school and your entry into the service.

WS: … I was working in New York for a textile company. They were brokers for textile mills down South, and then, in 1940, when things were building up in Europe and war was imminent and the draft was just being started, I decided the best thing for me to do was to volunteer, and, at that time, get your one year over with, [laughter] which turned out to be over five years for me.

SI: Was it difficult to find your job during the Depression?

WS: It was relatively difficult. I went to an agency, you know, that listed various jobs and I remember going back and forth a few times before anything came up that I could qualify for, that I could get.

SI: You wrote down on our survey that your parents were Republicans. What did they think of Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal programs?

WS: Well, I don't know what they thought about it initially. I was just a kid at that time, eleven or twelve, or something like that, but I think, in general, the way things progressed and the way he put people to work with the various agencies he started, the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] and the WPA [Works Progress Administration] and all those things, I think, in general, most people looked more favorably on him, because the country was changing. Whether you were Republican or Democrat, if the economy and the jobs were getting better, then, people certainly looked at it in a much more pleasant light.

SI: Were you able to see the effects of the New Deal programs in Roselle Park, such as WPA building projects?

WS: No, there … weren't any of those projects, that I can recall, in Roselle Park, not specific programs, like building a road or bridges or anything like that. I don't recall anything like that, but, in general, throughout the country, there was, as you know, a lot of that sort of thing.

SI: In the 1930s, you were obviously busy with school and work, but, did you follow the news of what was going on in Europe and, perhaps, in Asia?

WS: Oh, yes. I've always been a big newspaper guy. I got the paper every day and read it and, commuting back and forth to New York, that was what I did on the commute all the time, and that was a big part of my day, reading the paper, and still is.

SI: What did you think of what was going on with Hitler and Mussolini?

WS: Well, it's hard to think back to exactly what my feelings were at the time, but you knew that it was, you know, going to be a very serious proposition in Europe and we were still, we here in the United States, … talking about staying out of the conflict, but, at the same time, we were building up the Army, and the Navy, and the Marines, and everything. So, there was an underlying thought that, you know, "We're going to get into it. It's probably going to be [soon]." Then, of course, Pearl Harbor changed everything.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor, did you personally feel that the United States would become involved in the war? Were you more isolationist or interventionist?

WS: No. I believe I did think that we would have to become involved. … Again, thinking back, we're talking about sixty-three or four years, that's probably one reason that I volunteered for the service.

SI: How did your parents feel about what was going on in Europe? Did you ever discuss it with them?

WS: Well, probably, at the time, we did, but, I mean, that's so far back, I don't recall any real, intense discussions about it at all and maybe they didn't discuss it as much with the kids as they [did with each other], to keep it away or something, but I don't recall any serious discussions about it with them.

SI: Did your parents keep in touch with any relatives in Germany or Denmark?

WS: In Germany, yes, until the war, and then, of course, you couldn't do it any longer, but my father used to get letters and write back and forth with some of his brothers and sisters.

SI: What was it like to work in New York in 1930s and the years leading up to the war? How was the city different?

WS: Actually, … it was very pleasant. I enjoyed it and the atmosphere in New York, at that time, was so much different than it is now. … We used to take the train from Roselle Park, and then, the ferry across the Hudson and end up down by Liberty Street, I believe it was, and where I worked was up a little further uptown, at Worth Street, … and that was about, maybe, half, three-quarters of a mile walk, but even if we stayed late or stayed for a movie and it was eleven, twelve o'clock at night, you'd walk down through those streets and it was just abandoned. There were no apartments or people around or anything, but you never felt like it was a dangerous area or anything. It was just, you know, okay, you had to walk there to get the ferry and you did it and never worried about it. So, it was a different atmosphere than there is now. You didn't hear about crime and things, and I don't think there was nearly that [much] in New York, like there is now.

SI: Would you see movies and plays in the city often?

WS: Oh, yes, quite a bit. … Sometimes, I'd stay overnight in the YMCA and I forget what the cost of a room was, but it was like three or four dollars, I think. I mean, there wasn't any bathrooms in the rooms or anything. You had to go down the hall to shower and go to the bathroom, but it was only a couple of bucks to stay there, so, sometimes, we did that.

SI: Since this was the Depression era, did you see many hobos or breadlines, that sort of thing?

WS: In New York, you did. You didn't notice anything here in the Roselle Park area, but there were a lot like that in New York, yes.

JK: Not even with the train coming through? Did anyone stop in Roselle Park to look for work?

WS: There was, to a degree. I remember people coming to the door and asking if there was any work that you had for them, you know, that they could do, whatever, repairs or painting and things like that, because they were just looking for a couple of dollars, or maybe a sandwich even, or something like that.

SI: I thought it was interesting that you said crime in New York was almost nonexistent. I was reading the other day where an author characterized the Great Depression as a very violent time, but I have never heard that before through these interviews. I suppose he was talking more about the culture in general, like Al Capone and other gangsters.

WS: Oh, that part, yes. That was a very violent time, but, you know, that was so isolated from most people and just built up in the papers and in the newsreels and that sort of thing, you know, the Dillingers and all that sort of [stuff]. It was violent from that standpoint, but not from, like, individual crimes in towns against people. There never seem to be much concern about that sort of thing.

SI: Can you tell about the process of volunteering? Why did you choose the Army?

WS: Well, you know, basically, at that time, no one did very much traveling. I think the furthest I'd been was, a friend of mine from high school and I drove down to Washington, DC, one time. We thought that was a big deal, stayed in a hotel, that was a big deal, but, anyway, in commuting, I read about this outfit in New York City that was going to be activated. It was a National Guard outfit and this was, like, in August, July or August, of 1940, and they were going to Alabama and I thought, "Boy, that'd be nice, to be in Alabama for the winter," and so, I talked a couple of my buddies into going with me and we went over and investigated, and then, volunteered with that outfit. We were the only three fellows from New Jersey in that outfit. Everybody else was from the Bronx, New York, and up in that area. So, we kind of stood out, but it was the 105th Field Artillery, the 27th Division, and we did go down to Fort McClellan, Alabama, and spent the winter there, and then, next summer, and right after the war started, after Pearl Harbor, we were sent to California and we were in an area just south of Los Angeles for a while. … Of course, everyone was concerned about what was going to happen in the US and there were, supposedly, Japanese submarines going up and down the coast and shelling some of the refineries and all that sort of thing. … We had .105 and .75-mm artillery and we were supposed to be looking out, on alert, for any submarines or anything. One time, we went up to a town called Venice, just south of Los Angeles, and a submarine was sighted, and we set up on the boardwalk, and, every time the gun went off, it went off the boardwalk, because we couldn't dig in the, whatever the arms were called at that point, I forget, but, anyway, you know, it was a time of great concern for everyone, and that was for maybe a couple, three months, there, and then, we went over to Hawaii, and I was detached at that point to a topographical engineering outfit and we were surveying the island of Kauai for gun positions, because Kauai is the furthest island out. They thought, "Well, that's probably where they'd land," and there were very few people living on that island at the time. That was actually a great job I had. We had that for about six months, … just surveying the whole island, and every afternoon, we took a dip in the

ocean and we were segregated from our own outfit. This was a bunch of guys from different outfits [that] were doing it. So, we had some autonomy and moved around pretty much as we wanted and it was really good duty. Then, I was sent back from Hawaii to go to artillery officers' candidate school in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. You want me to just continue with this or do you want to ask questions? …

SI: When you joined the 27th Division, was there an induction process or was it just like signing up for the National Guard?

WS: Yes, that's all. It wasn't … a big deal at all.

SI: Okay. Your basic training was at Fort McClellan.

WS: [Yes.]

SI: Was it a rude awakening for you to go from civilian life to the military?

WS: It was. Actually, I didn't care for it at all. [laughter] I couldn't wait for the year to be up, which, as I said before, turned out to be a little over five years, but it was very monotonous, doing the same thing almost every day, you know, and I was a private, you know; … can't have privileges as a private, at the time. [laughter] So, it was something I didn't really enjoy very much.

SI: The 27th was a National Guard unit. Many of the men that we have interviewed have criticized the National Guard system, saying that there was a lot of nepotism, the "good ole boy" network, that did not work well during the war. Did you find this to be true?

WS: That was absolutely true. Yes, in that outfit, it was very much that way. These guys had been together for years and they pulled each other along and did things, and overlooked a lot of things they shouldn't have overlooked. There was a lot of nepotism and that's one of the things that disgusted me with the Army. That wasn't like going into the regular Army. That, to me, was a serious mistake I made, doing it that way, but I thought, you know, for a year, I could do any of that stuff, but, when I think back on it, people that just volunteered for the US Army, not going into a National Guard outfit, only a few months different than I did, had many more opportunities, and especially if they had any kind of an education. At that time, a high school education was good. I mean, a lot of the guys that were in the service with me didn't have a high school education and they were promoted very much more rapidly than we were in our outfit, because of the people that had been there for years and they were cousins and brothers and uncles [laughter] and all that sort of thing. So, it was very difficult to get anywhere, but the fellows that just joined the Army, or the Navy, or whatever, got promotions pretty rapidly. If I hadn't been selected for officer training school, I would have had a much more difficult time for the rest of the service.

SI: Were you placed into the artillery unit or did you select that assignment?

WS: That's what I say, I volunteered for that, … for the 105th, [which] was an artillery [unit].

SI: Okay, but that was part of the …

WS: Yes, that's right, part of the 27th Division.

SI: You volunteered specifically for that unit.

WS: Yes, yes, because that was the one that was in the Bronx, New York.

SI: What was it like to go through training in Alabama? Was it hot?

WS: Well, it was very boring, yes, and I don't recall it being that hot or uncomfortable that way. It was just, you know, the same routine sort of thing, day after day. … It really wasn't very pleasant and, when you got a pass, there were not many places to go. There was just a small town, Anniston, Alabama, there and not much to do, overrun with a bunch of GIs, and so, you know, … it wasn't like going on a nice three-day pass somewhere or something.

SI: You were trained by the National Guard personnel, not separate drill instructors, correct?

WS: Yes, basically, National Guard officers and NCOs.

SI: Did you go out on maneuvers?

WS: Yes, overnight maneuvers and some regular maneuvers, yes. … One time, we went, I think it was to Arkansas maneuvers for quite a while.

SI: Were you used to that kind of life? Had you done a lot of camping before going into the service?

WS: No. [laughter] Well, I'd been in the Boy Scouts. I spent some time in the Boy Scouts and went the grade next to Eagle Scout, a Life Scout, and I'd been to camp for a couple of years, Boy Scout camp, took a lot of merit badges and things like that, but I wasn't that much of an outdoor guy at that point, I mean outdoor camping type guy.

SI: Most of the men in your unit in this period were from the same area. Did you meet people from all over the country? Was that a new experience for you?

WS: … Not until I became an officer and we had people, then, from all over the country. So, when I came back from Hawaii to officer training school, I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and that was an artillery school, for artillery officers, and, after I left and graduated from there, I had about a ten-day, maybe two weeks, leave and reported back to Fort Bragg, which was in North Carolina, and I had an opportunity to go either into a line division or an armored division or an airborne division. I was lucky; I had … all three of them offered to me and I took the airborne division, and then, … we were in the original cadre of the 11th Airborne Division. It was a new division being formed.

JK: What was the time frame here? When were you in Officer's Candidate School?

WS: I went in September of 1942 and I graduated the end of December in 1942 and I reported to the 11th Airborne Division, I think it was … late January or early February of 1943.

JK: At that time, was your class in OCS fairly large? From what I understand, in late 1942, officers were coming out of OCS in full force. The Army was trying to get as many men trained as possible.

WS: Yes, well, they were putting so many people into the service and they were lacking officers and I don't know how many were in my actual graduating class at Sill, but, as I recall, I think it was only like, maybe, one hundred-and-fifty to two hundred, or somewhere in there, … and I don't know how many classes they graduated per month or what. I don't really know what that sequence was.

SI: Where were most of the other men in your class from? They were drawn from other units, but, in terms of their backgrounds, were they high school graduates or college educated people?

WS: Yes, most of them. … You had to have an IQ of at least 110 and I don't remember whether there was a requirement that you had to be a high school graduate or what, but there may have been, and they were from all different units all around the country. The guys that were the officers in my battalion were from all over Texas to [the] Midwest and the far West, we had guys from California, not only officers, but men. … A lot of men were from Texas.

JK: Was the IQ test administered when you first enlisted or did that come later, once you applied for OCS?

WS: That was something that … was done very poorly. When I went to Alabama with the 105th, one day, it was raining very, very hard, and so, they said, "Well, everybody into this," you know, they had those great, big tents where, sometimes, … you'd eat your meals or whatever, and there were a bunch of long tables, and they just sat us down on the benches and the long table, and they said, "Now, we're going to give you this test," and never explained the seriousness of getting a good grade on it. … I guess, as I recall, they may have said it's an IQ test. So, sitting next to me was an old sergeant and he had, I think, very little education and he kept wrapping me and saying, "What's this? What is the answer to this?" you know, and I'm trying to help him, [laughter] and not paying that much attention to what's going on, and, later, I mean, not until it came up to being a possible Officer Candidate School [student] did I realize that that was the basis, that you had to have at least a 110. I honestly could have done a lot better if I knew the seriousness of it, but they didn't … emphasize that at all.

JK: I know that this was a long time ago, but was the test based on military knowledge, based on your training, or general knowledge?

WS: No, it was a general IQ test, to test your IQ. Yes, it was not military at all. It was just general, you know, math, English, the whole bit.

SI: Did the officers in the 27th Infantry Division make it difficult for you to leave? I have been told that the National Guard units did not want to promote you, but they did not want to get rid of you, either.

WS: Yes, well, that's an interesting comment and I don't recall that it was difficult. I had a captain that was a very, very good officer, his name was Shelby, and, when it came to going, I think he recommended some people, and I was one of them, as long you had that 110, I believe it was. I think that was the figure of your IQ and I remember going up before a board and being asked a bunch of general questions, you know, about the US and Japan, and current events, and all that sort of thing, and then, being approved by that, before we were sent back from Hawaii to go to Fort Sill.

SI: You were sent to Hawaii not long after Pearl Harbor.

WS: Yes, about three months.

SI: What was the general feeling at that point? Did you think that an invasion was imminent?

WS: We thought it was quite possible and, of course, you've seen the destruction at Pearl Harbor, well, we saw that firsthand, and Hawaii wasn't built up like it is now. There were, like, two hotels on the mainland, at Oahu there, and I happened to be stationed at Schofield Barracks for a while, where the first attack was on Schofield, too, as well as on Pearl Harbor, and there was a general anxiety about what was going to happen, and that's why we were trying to prepare for a possible invasion and why we were surveying for gun positions on Kauai.

SI: Where were you when you found out that Pearl Harbor had been attacked?

WS: … Let's see, I was still in McClellan, in Alabama, and, right after that, we were sent out to the West Coast.

SI: What was the reaction on the base that day?

WS: Oh, it was exciting, especially, you know, after war was declared, and then, we all knew, "Well, this is a whole different story now than it was just in training." I mean, "This is a new event here and, now, this is war."

SI: Did you realize right away that you were going to be in for quite a bit longer?

WS: Oh, yes. … The time had already been extended because of the seriousness of the events in Europe and with Japan, because there were a lot of things going on between the US and Japan before they made the attack, and so, I was supposed to get out in October of 1941 and they extended it, and then, right after that, of course, December, … the war was declared.

SI: I have read that there was a lot of dissatisfaction with that extension, the "Over the Hill in October" idea.

WS: Oh, yes, "Over the Hill in October," yes. [laughter] They used to holler, "OHIO," Over the Hill in October. [laughter]

SI: We discussed nepotism among the officers and non-coms in the 27th Division, but would you say that they were competent leaders? You mentioned the one man, Captain Shelby.

WS: Yes, he was a very good officer, … some of the lieutenants were good, but there were a lot that really weren't and a lot of them that, I think, were very lacking of any competency, really.

SI: Other interviewees in similar situations said that they were almost hesitant to go into a combat situation under the National Guard leadership.

WS: Actually, that division had a very hard time. They didn't do well at all. They didn't really have a lot of combat experience, because they were pulled out. They didn't do well at all.

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SI: When you were at Fort Sill, was OCS a high-pressure situation, where they were trying to cram as much classroom work and so forth in as possible?

WS: Fort Sill, … the artillery school, I thought, was very well run. It was very intense and a lot of studying and a lot of the things were done much better than I'd seen things done in the service before that. You know, I think they did a good job at the school. They cranked out officers pretty quickly and … they used to call them the "ninety-day wonders," but, at the same time, you learned an awful lot there and a lot of fellows didn't make it. A very good percentage of them that started never graduated and part of that was … not only what you were doing in the school, and the marks you got, and firing artillery, and the things you studied and all that, but the other candidates all evaluated you, and the guys that didn't get a good evaluation were gone.

SI: You had been in an artillery unit for about two years.

WS: [Yes].

SI: What did you learn at Fort Sill that you had not already known?

WS: Well, there was a lot I learned, because you had to take all kinds of math things, you know, artillery triangles and all kinds of things like that, and, of course, when I was a corporal, I didn't get to fire batteries and do all that sort of thing. It was pretty intense, the officer training school, very little time off, but well organized, I thought.

SI: Were most of the officer candidates young? What was the average age? Were they kids or older guys?

WS: No, they were all young guys, I'd say under twenty-five, mostly. I guess I was twenty-one.

SI: OCS was one of the few areas in the military that was not segregated at the time. Were there any African-American officer candidates?

WS: No, no, none.

SI: At that point, the war had been on for quite a while. Were you frustrated that you had not been sent overseas?

WS: No, because I had been in Hawaii and, you know, that was kind of like the outpost at that time. … We didn't have anything any further than that. Midway happened when I was in Hawaii and that was, of course, the turning point, but, no, I was in the service and, when you are, you just kind of take what comes. You don't have a whole lot of choice of what's going to happen, depending upon where your unit is sent.

SI: Was there any kind of reaction to Midway? Were you put on alert?

WS: Yes. There was a reaction to Midway, yes, because, if they had taken Midway, that would have been a big step towards Hawaii. Yes, I assume everybody's seen that movie *Midway*. [laughter] It's on about every other week or so, it seems.

SI: When you were in Hawaii, how did you get along with the other servicemen there? Was there any inter-service rivalry?

WS: No. As I said, most of time I was there, well, I guess, initially, for the first couple of months, I was with my own unit there, and then, I was detached to the topographical engineering group, and there were about twenty of us, maybe, altogether, we all stayed in a small schoolhouse and lived there, and some of the guys, every day, would just stay and make maps of what we had surveyed a couple of days before, and they were drawing maps while we were out with Philadelphia rods and transits and that sort of thing, making the actual survey. So, we didn't even have our own mess hall or anything. We used to have, like, a general pass to eat wherever we were near. For lunches or dinners, we always went pretty much to the same place, because we'd be back at our place and we'd go to the nearest unit, but it wasn't our unit, it was somebody else.

JK: When you first got to Hawaii, were you shocked by the devastation at Pearl Harbor? It seems as though most people at the time really did not know how bad the attack had been, especially in the mainland United States.

WS: Yes. I guess, to a degree, I was, but I think we had known that … it was pretty well decimated, particularly all the ships and everything that had been sunk. That became pretty much general knowledge.

SI: After you were commissioned at Fort Sill, where were you assigned to next?

WS: As I say, I had that ten-day leave and went to Bragg and selected the airborne. I went to Camp McCall, North Carolina, which was a brand-new camp just for our division, and … all the

recruits that we got in were volunteers for the airborne, and they didn't have to jump, but they had to go in the gliders, and it was training, basic training for many of them, because they'd never been in the service more than a few weeks. So, it was all … starting from the ground up for the division.

SI: What attracted you to the airborne?

WS: I guess maybe two things; it was really considered the most elite division, [that] part of the service, and there was really a division between the airborne and the rest of the service. I mean, when we wore jump boots and … parachute patches on our hats and wings and everything, … it was just different and there was always, between the regular line troops and our guys, … battles and things in town, and we had difficulty with our guys not wanting to salute line officers and things like that. … Also, at that time, which was probably a big inducement, … I got one hundred dollars a month more for jumping. So, that was … big. In other words, a second lieutenant in the airborne made as much as a major, two hundred-and-fifty dollars a month. So, that was, you know, an inducement I'm sure, maybe.

SI: Was that true for glider troops also?

WS: No, that was one of the very disparaging things that should have been done and wasn't. As I recall, I think, later, maybe, 1944, the glider troops did get the … additional glider pay, just like a jumper did, which, for an enlisted man, was fifty dollars a month.

SI: You were in an artillery unit within the 11th Airborne.

WS: [Yes].

SI: I have only heard a little bit about airborne artillery units. How did that work? How was it different from a normal artillery unit?

WS: Well, first of all, initially, you took a .75-mm howitzer and broke it down in six parts and put it into para-racks under the plane and jumped it in six parts, just let the artillery pieces [drop] in the chutes, and then, you put it together after you got down on the ground. So, that was … the big difference, [laughter] probably, and, later on, we could put .105-mm artillery into gliders and bring in .105s in gliders, and jeeps and everything, in gliders.

SI: In half of the stories I have heard about airborne units, their equipment gets blown away and lost in the jump. What were you trained to do in that situation?

WS: Well, that did happen a lot. It happened a lot in Europe, you know, and it's just a case of being dropped in the right place and finding the equipment and getting your units together and everything, which you trained like mad for all the time; a big part of your training, how quickly you could exit the plane, you know. There was always some officer who was down on the ground and timing the time [from when] the first man went out until the whole stick had gone out, to clear the plane as quickly as possible, because you might have a very small jump field,

and so, that was a big part of the training, to be able to land your unit pretty much together and get your equipment.

SI: What was it like the first time you jumped?

WS: Very scary. [laughter] It was. … Even though you go through all that training and all for quite a period of time, when you get up in that plane, you realize you're not going to land with the plane, you're going to jump out of it. I consider myself, maybe, a little lucky, because I was the only officer in the plane, at that time, making the first jump, and I was the first guy out, and there's no way [laughter] I could have not gone out with a bunch of GIs behind me, you know. So, I think that, to a degree, helped me make my first jump.

SI: One paratrooper told me that you blackout a little when you go down? Did that happen to you?

WS: No, I never blacked out, that I can recall. It's a kind of, like, you wait for that initial shock, … for the parachute to open, the shroud lines all [to] be clear and not entwined and everything, you know, … but I don't recall blacking out. Once that opens up, you feel just as happy as anything going down, looking for where you're going to land and slipping the chute to try to land in a good spot.

JK: Do you have any idea, an estimate, perhaps, of how many jumps you made?

WS: I didn't really make very many. I made ten altogether, but most of them were all training jumps. You know, in the Pacific, we didn't have the chance, really, to parachute like they did in the European Theater, because either you're in the mountains or something like that, or you didn't have enough equipment to bring all that into one area to jump. So, most of the jumps in the Pacific were, like, one company or something like that, just to do something that was [small], you know, to make an area cleared for somebody else going through or something like that.

JK: I guess it was the same way for gliders.

WS: Yes, there was very little [glider activity]; only in Aparri, Luzon, in the Philippines, was where the only glider [operations] really came to being.

SI: Can you tell us about training the glider troops?

WS: … That was really quite an unusual thing. Most of the training, if it really comes down to it, the gliders were more dangerous than jumping, mostly because they were just made of hardly anything. You could put your finger right through that, just canvas on the side, and, one time, I was in New Guinea and was flying up. I was going to be one of the officers in the training school for new glider men up in the northern part of New Guinea, in Nadzac, and we're going up what was called the Markham Valley, and we're sitting in this glider, and we had, you know, some equipment with us in our barracks bags, and the glider was jumping around quite a bit, and one guy let his go and it went right through the top of the glider [laughter] and, you know, it just tore the whole thing apart. … They were very flimsy and more people got killed or hurt or

injured in gliders than jumping, because, when you'd lash a jeep or a .105-mm gun down in the glider, … if that came loose when you landed, and the landings were always very difficult, because you just have to land in a field and you had no control as far as anything other than wind to get down there and to land, and if those lashings broke, that jeep or artillery piece just tore the glider apart, and the pilot and co-pilot, [who] were sitting right in front of it, were just, you know, killed or injured seriously, and the officers, even though we weren't glider pilots or anything, if my men were in a glider and I was riding a glider, I rode as co-pilot to the glider pilot, and, really, had very little to do except keep calling out the altitude … as he's going down. I believe it's a sixteen-to-one ratio of forward to declining, you know; in other words, you can go that far to every foot you go down, and so, the pilot's interested in where he is and how high he is and he's looking for a place to put it down. So, riding as co-pilot, you didn't have much to do other than to do that.

JK: Would you carry parachutes with you in the gliders?

WS: No, no. It wouldn't do you any good, you know. I mean, you're going down with the glider one way or the other. There's no way you're going to be jumping out of it. There's no way, hardly, to jump out of it, because the front nose opens up.

JK: That was how you got out. The front nose flips up, right?

WS: Yes, and the CG4A, I think, is the name of that type glider. We were talking about that [before the interview] you saw down in New Orleans [at the National D-Day Museum].

JK: That was the biggest type of glider, too. You could fit a jeep in there. That was the maximum load, though

WS: Yes, as I recall, they were about all the same. The British had some bigger ones, but … ours were all pretty much the same.

SI: At the time when you were training in gliders, had there been any actual glider combat operations?

WS: … Yes. The first glider operation was a fiasco, just a terrible [thing]. They almost cancelled the whole airborne training because of the Sicily operation. … I think at least fifty percent of the gliders never made it. … Some of them were shot down by friendly aircraft [naval gunfire] and it was a very, very difficult and disastrous operation, and our commanding general, General [Joseph] Swing, had gone over as an observer to that, and, when he came back, Washington almost cancelled the airborne, because they said it just wasn't [worth it], it wouldn't work, but the Germans looked like they were making it work. They had done a few things that seemed to work pretty well, so … I guess that was kind of an indication of why we should make more of an effort to do it.

SI: How intense was the physical training for paratroopers?

WS: Very. I mean, we really worked for physical fitness more than any other outfit and General Swing was a nut on the officers being more physically adept than the enlisted men. He used to have us running five miles before breakfast and we'd run by, … just the officers, would run by the barracks [laughter] and the GIs would be laughing at us, "Look at them. Who wants to be an officer?" but we did very serious physical training. It was very tough.

SI: I get the impression that, in many of the airborne outfits, if you screwed up once, you were out.

WS: Oh, yes. If you refused to jump, after you'd been qualified; if you refused to jump in training, before you got your wings, that was one thing, but you couldn't refuse to jump after you'd gotten your wings. Then, you were gone and they made a big production of it, really embarrassing the individual.

SI: There was obviously a lot of *esprit de corps* in these units. Can you talk a little bit about that and how you developed that feeling?

WS: Well, it really wasn't too difficult to develop, because, I mean, all the guys realized, I think, that anybody that's jumping out of a plane is doing a little bit more and it's a lot tougher thing than the line outfit, where the guys never do anything other than the regular service things, which, of course, were just as serious, but this is like something additional that had to be done, and that, in itself, just developed the *esprit de corps*, and having jump boots and, as I said, getting wings after you've made your limit of jumps, and wearing parachute patches and all that, built that up as being a superior force, you know, than a line outfit. So, it wasn't difficult to get these guys to feel that they were a little superior, but, if you went through an outfit the day before a jump, you could tell those guys were jumping the next day, because it was quiet and they were, you know, just anxious to see what was going to happen. … The night after they jumped, it's raucous and they're hollering and slapping each other on the back and, "How about that?" and, "We went out this way," and, "Did you do this?" [laughter] … So, it was different.

SI: Were there a lot of training accidents?

WS: I mean, we had some streamers, you know, but not to the degree of a high percentage, no. I had one incident happen to me that could have been serious, but it didn't turn out that way. As I said to you before, … the object of getting out of the plane as fast as you could was always part of the training, and so, I was the jumpmaster of the plane and was looking forward. You know, the guys are coming down the aisle and are hooked up and going out the door and I tapped the first guy out, and then, the whole stick goes, and then, you have to get up and turn around and hook up yourself and go out, and so, I made an awkward turn and I went like this, and before I even fell out of the plane, it was only a training thing, I should have gone back if I could have, but I hit my emergency chute and it came out all in my face, [laughter] and I was just falling out of the plane. Well, luckily, my main chute opened, and I looked, and all the shroud lines are in order and everything, so, I just pulled in the emergency chute, put it between my legs and had one of the best landings I ever had, [laughter] but a major came up to me and he said, "Well, Lieutenant," he said, "let's get going." I'm just thankful I'm down here. [laughter] He said,

"This is a training mission, let's go." He's kicking my butt to get moving and I'm just pleased to be down on land. [laughter]

SI: Did much of your training focus on what would happen if things went wrong, like if you were separated and scattered everywhere, that sort of thing?

WS: Yes, there was some training on that, but, looking back, I don't recall that there probably was as much as maybe there should have been, and I'm sure that the units that were in Europe maybe did more of that, because they were … always scattered all over the place, you know. You've heard instances of those in the 101st and the 82nd, but I don't recall there being that much with us, but there probably was quite a bit. It's a long time ago.

SI: In training, would things filter in from practical experiences in the field, people coming in and saying, "Well, this does not work and that does not work?"

WS: Well, I can recall just having a couple of officers' meetings from people coming in from Fort Benning and things like that and talking a little bit about things like that, but not a big deal.

SI: You started out as the cadre of this unit. Before you went into combat, was everyone green or were there some veterans from other units in the outfit?

WS: No one that had seen combat that I know of, no. I can't think of anybody that had been overseas and came back and was in our unit.

SI: When you were in training, was there any special emphasis that led you to believe that you might be going to Europe or the Pacific?

WS: Well, we really didn't know, of course, until we went to California, and then, we figured, "Well…" [laughter] So, that was it. I mean, we knew then that we were probably going to the Pacific and we were the only airborne division in the Pacific. We went first to New Guinea and we stayed there for a number of months and did a lot more training there. Most of the fighting, by the time we got to New Guinea, was over.

SI: How did you get to New Guinea, by ship?

WS: Yes, a long trip in a banana boat. It was a terrible ship. Everybody, almost, slept on deck, including the officers and it was so hot and it was a long trip and we were on our own. We didn't have any escorts, … and there were submarines, you know, supposedly, in the area, but they figured that one ship could, maybe, at times, be a little more elusive than having an escort. So, we were in this banana boat on our way to New Guinea. [laughter]

JK: Was that directly from California to New Guinea?

WS: San Francisco.

JK: No stops?

WS: No. It was almost a month, as I recall. It took us twenty-eight or nine days, I think, and, a funny thing, we went out, we went under the Golden Gate Bridge, and we got out in the Pacific, and they turned around for some reason. We went back to the dock in San Francisco. Everybody's saying, "Oh, neat," you know. [laughter] Everybody thought we're going to get off and do something. They turned right around and went out. [laughter] I don't know why they went back.

SI: After you arrived in New Guinea, was your training any different from your training in the States or were you just keeping your readiness up?

WS: No, it was more intense. We did a lot more intense things and, you know, the facilities there were better for jungle training because it was jungle, and that's what we were going to be doing, mostly, and where we were going, so, it was easier to train that way, in New Guinea, and we, of course, had planes and practice jumps and stuff like that there, too.

SI: Was it more difficult to coordinate the jumps in the jungle?

WS: To coordinate them in what way?

SI: As opposed to Europe, where there was more open space.

WS: Actually, there were a lot of places where we couldn't even use C-46s or C-47s. Mostly, we had C-46s; like, in Leyte, the jungle, … it was all jungle. If you got a jump field that was as big as this property, it was something. So, we were jumping out of L-4 observation planes, one man at a time, and there was about maybe twelve of them just circling, taking one man, hooking up, going in and dropping into the jungle, because there was no jump field there, and that worked out pretty well, got a lot of people into the jungle that way.

SI: From New Guinea, what was your next move?

WS: Next move, we went to Leyte in the Philippines. One of the things that was kind of interesting, I might mention it, one of the better things, I think, that the Army did was, initially, everybody, when they started with the airborne and paratroops, everybody packed their own chutes. We had these big tables, you laid out the shroud lines and you folded it a certain way. Of course, everyone was very meticulous about how the chute was going to be packed, [laughter] to make sure it was all right, you know. You took a long time and, later, they found out that, "Hey, this is not good." So, they made a "rigger company" and that's all these guys did, was pack chutes all day. Well, they could pack them fast. They knew what they were doing, they were packing chutes, I mean, not that they did it all day, but they did it for a good part of it and got very adept at it. … Then, like buying insurance, they lined up all the chutes outside and you just went along and picked up a chute; well, the day of the jump, they'd go into the rigger company and say, "Okay, today, you're jumping and you're jumping," [laughter] and they got in the line, picked up the next chute. So, they made sure all the chutes were packed well, because they might be jumping their own. I mean, that was, I thought, one of the unique things about the service, doing that.

JK: Would you check your chute? Would you repack it?

WS: No, you couldn't repack it. When you stood up to jump, … there were, like, three commands, you know, "Stand up, hook up, check chutes," and the guy behind you would check to see that the strap and the hook was all coming out properly, and, you know, you just check it quickly, but there was no way you could check the chute itself. It was all inside.

SI: Were you sent to Leyte, then, sent into combat or did you drop in from New Guinea?

WS: No, we went into Leyte in ships and that was the first operation that the Japs had started to use kamikazes, and I remember seeing them and thinking, you know, "That guy, he's not going to go. He's not going to go all the way down. He's going to pull out." "Boom," right into the ship, … blow up themselves, and we saw one guy, apparently, he was shot down by antiaircraft and he jumped out. He had a parachute, which I was surprised [by], but I guess they gave them parachutes in case something happened when they were still in friendly waters or something, and he reached up and cut the shroud lines and just let himself freefall. I mean, that's the dedication that they had. That was just, you know, like, it was unbelievable for us to think that they would do that, and they did it by the hundreds. You know, the kamikaze pilots at the end of the war, at Okinawa, were one after the other and they were all volunteers, dying for the Emperor.

SI: What kind of ship did you travel to Leyte on? Was it an LST?

WS: No, … let's see, what was that? That was pretty much like a regular troopship, as I remember it, and then, we got off, yes, because we went down rope ladders on the side and got into the landing crafts.

SI: Was this after the initial invasion?

WS: … We were, no, like the second day, or the end of the first day, but we didn't have … a lot of casualties in the landing, though. It wasn't that bad.

SI: Can you describe the landing itself?

WS: It was, as I say, relatively passive. There was no enemy fire, as I recalled it, like that picture of MacArthur, when [he] says, "We have returned," [laughter] and all the photographers were there, you know, for "the actor," and it was about like that. We didn't … have any casualties. We had a lot of casualties when we were fighting in Leyte, but not in the landing.

SI: You were used as ground troops right away.

WS: Yes. I mean, we didn't always jump in.

SI: Okay, I misunderstood.

WS: First of all, you couldn't jump in a whole division. An airborne division isn't nearly as big as a line division. There's about ten thousand men in an airborne division, but, even so, you couldn't jump them all in. There wasn't enough equipment to do that or anything and, if you could land by landing craft or whatever, it certainly was a lot easier and less casualties than trying to jump in an area where there's very little open area.

SI: Before going into combat, did you have any amphibious training?

WS: Yes. We did a little, not a lot, but we did some, just how to load up and how to go down the nets and stuff. …

SI: When you were in New Guinea, you knew, towards the end, that you were going into combat.

WS: Oh, yes, oh, yes, we knew. We knew that it was going to be an island hopping thing and that MacArthur was fighting to get back to the Philippines, you know. We were probably going to be a part of that, the Philippine operation.

SI: Were there any unique preparations for the Philippines campaign? How did you prepare yourself mentally, once you knew that you were going into combat?

WS: Well, I don't really recall that we did. We just knew we were going and we had to do it, you know, and I don't recall what feeling we had. … That was all we'd been training for and we're going to do it. That's all I can remember, from that standpoint.

SI: Once you were on Leyte, you went into combat on the second day.

WS: It was early the second day, I guess, you know, and it was a case of the mountains between one side of the island and the other side of the island, … it was completely mountainous, and even though we were artillery, you couldn't hardly fire artillery there, because you couldn't have spaces to set it up. You couldn't get the artillery pieces into the mountains. So, we were acting as infantry. We were going out on patrols, just like [the] infantry was.

SI: What was that experience like? I mean, the first time you were under fire was seeing the kamikaze attacks.

WS: Yes, yes, that was probably the most, and … I recall, like, maybe the third or fourth day we were there, we're up in the mountains and we had a perimeter and there was an attack, a *banzai* attack on the perimeter. That was pretty exciting. These guys just kept coming until, you know; they knew they were at a very bad disadvantage, they're probably going to be killed, but that's the way they operated.

SI: Were you shocked at how fanatical the Japanese were?

WS: Yes, I was. It's hard to think of individuals being that way, right?

SI: Were you told about this in training, that they would do this, or was this totally out of the blue?

WS: The kamikazes were new. That was, I think, the first attack of kamikazes, that landing. We knew about the *banzai* because that had happened on other islands. We knew that they just threw themselves against the perimeters and everything. That was nothing new. Well, can we take a little break for a couple of minutes or so?

[TAPE PAUSED]

From Leyte here to Luzon, you have more questions on Leyte?

SI: What is your most vivid memory of Leyte?

WS: Well, I guess two things come to mind. One would be the *banzai* attack, which we just mentioned.

SI: How close were you to that attack?

WS: I was … right in the perimeter that they were attacking, and the other would be, on one of the patrols we went out on, what we tried to do was set up an overnight thing, … you know, it was just like paths through the jungle which both the Japanese and ourselves were using. That's the only transportation [routes], there were no roads or anything once you got into the mountains. So, we'd send patrols out and dig in and, hopefully, maybe a Japanese patrol would come along, you know, during the night or even during the day, and I had a patrol this one day and we used to set grenade traps, where you'd put a line across … the path, and then, if somebody tripped it, the grenade'd go off. Well, one of my men was setting the grenade trap and it went off and he got wounded. So, I think we only had, maybe, seven or eight guys, I forget. So, he couldn't walk, so, we had to send three guys back with him. So, that was four guys [left]. So, I said, "Well, we'll just have to go back to base camp and do it again in another day or two." So, we took him back, and then, the next day, we went out and set up even in a better place, where three of these trails came together, but we stayed all night, nothing ever happened. … That was one of the things I recall and … one of, probably, the main things that come to mind is, I used to do a lot of flying. You saw a picture in the den there of that L-4 with me and that pilot. He was a good buddy of mine and we used to fly around a lot and I would be the artillery observer and he was the pilot, although, in Leyte, as I said, we didn't set up the artillery much. … I was at this airfield, I think it was (Burauen?) was the name of the town, and that afternoon, for some reason, which I can't recall, we went to one of the main towns on the island Tacloban, and we stayed overnight there and, during the night, the Japs turned the tables on us and made a parachute jump on the field that we'd left, and some of my buddies were at the airfield there and they jumped into a slit trench and one guy jumped into a latrine trench [laughter] and stayed there all night, because there was a machine gun opened up, … a Jap machine gun, right near him. He was there the whole night. I might have been right next to him if I'd been at that field, but we came back the next morning and they were still trying to get the Japs off the field and there was some fighting and we had a couple of grenades and we were throwing them out of the L-4 at these

guys and that was kind of exciting, but, to think of specific instances, those [are the] first couple that come to mind.

SI: When you were operating as infantrymen, were these patrol type operations your main mode of operating?

WS: Yes, that's all we did, was patrols, yes.

SI: When you were on these patrols, what was the biggest danger you faced? Was it things like mines or snipers?

WS: No, no. … There were no mines. I don't recall any mines. I recall running into a Japanese patrol one day and we had … quite a scuffle with them and killed a number of them, had a couple of our guys wounded, and, as a matter-of-fact, I still have a little .22 caliber pistol upstairs that I had taken out of musette bag of one of the Japanese that was there. It's a chrome plated pistol, which is one of my more cherished souvenirs, [laughter] and we had quite a scuffle with them, I recall that, but that's all I really [remember], you know, that come to mind right now.

SI: How well supplied were you?

WS: We were really very well supplied. … You know, we never were without rations or anything that I recall and I can recall them dropping cans of turkey to us in the mountains on Thanksgiving Day and having a meal out of that sort of thing, but, in general, we were pretty well supplied and some of the supplies came up … by carabao with some natives and some of our infantry, maybe, along with them, you know, and that sort of thing, but, in general, we were supplied with food and ammunition.

SI: In these operations, would you ever have to call on air support or any other kind of fire support?

WS: I don't recall that happening on Leyte at all. It happened a number of times in Luzon. … I don't think there were any … air fighter units; … well, there might have been up in Tacloban, but I don't recall that we ever used them, but we did in Luzon, a number of times.

SI: During your first few combat encounters, was there anybody who could not handle the stress of combat?

WS: No, I don't recall any of the guys that got … what we call combat fatigue or whatever. I don't recall it, … not there in Leyte. In Luzon, there were a couple of guys that had some problems.

JK: Do you think that happened less in the airborne division because you were better trained than the regular line infantry units?

WS: I really wouldn't have a comparison, but, from what I hear, there was quite a bit of it in the line infantry. … You know, they could have been more intense battles or they were on-the-line longer; … it's hard to evaluate that sort of thing, the comparison between the two. …

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. William C. Schnorr on August 28, 2003, in Mountainside, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

JK: Jared Kosch.

SI: We were talking about your combat experiences in Leyte.

JK: I think we were on the time frame.

WS: … How long were we in combat? I think we were probably [there] a couple of months, off and on. Occasionally, we'd go back and maybe be at rest camp for a while, and then, go out again.

SI: What was the tempo of combat? Did the heavy attacks stop after a while?

WS: Well, really, in Leyte, there wasn't much heavy attacks, you know, I mean, just those *banzai* things and so forth, but, mostly, it was just trying to root them out and have the patrols pick them up and destroy them, but, … on the other side of the mountains, … and I wasn't personally a part of it, but a couple of our … infantry battalions had some fairly intense fighting for fairly long periods of time.

SI: Both before and during combat, how did you view the Japanese as an enemy?

WS: You wouldn't believe the attitude people had towards Japan at that time. It's hard for anybody to understand, but it was just [that] everybody had what you probably would say complete hatred for them.

SI: You mentioned the .22. Was there a lot of souvenir hunting?

WS: … Yes. Every time you went out, if you had a scuffle with somebody, [you] came back with some souvenirs.

SI: Did you work at all with native Filipino forces?

WS: Not on Leyte. We did in Luzon. On Leyte, there were no Filipino forces, but the Filipinos were helpful, maybe, in other ways, you know, like bringing supplies in with the carabaos and that sort of thing, but … they didn't participate in any fighting or anything or show us where the Japs where or anything, as they did in Luzon. In Luzon, they were very helpful.

SI: There were no airdrops in Leyte.

WS: … I think there was one C-46 [that] tried a drop and hardly anybody made it to the small field, so, then, just the L-4s and L-5s there dropped, one at a time, into the mountains. That was the only drops.

SI: You were not a part of that.

WS: No.

SI: Once Leyte was secured, did you stay on Leyte until you went to Luzon?

WS: Yes, yes. We stayed there.

SI: What kind of casualties did both your immediate unit and the division suffer in Leyte?

WS: The division suffered quite a few casualties. I can't put it in numbers. As I say, I'd have to read up on my history. You know, I have two books that give the history of the division and they have those kind of figures in them, but I don't recall what they were.

SI: Was it in the hundreds or thousands?

WS: You mean you're talking about dead and wounded?

SI: Yes.

WS: I'd just be guessing if I gave you a figure. I don't really know that I should, because, oh, it was more than a hundred, I guess, you know, quite a few hundred.

JK: You stayed on Leyte for some time after it was secure.

WS: Yes, just a few weeks, as I recall. We stayed right on the beach. We were camped right on the beach, before we went to Luzon.

SI: When you first started losing men, particularly men who were killed, how did you deal with that and how did the unit cope?

WS: Well, you know, it's tragic to lose anybody and have them wounded or anything like that. … It's just something that, I guess, when you're in a combat unit, you know it's going to happen to somebody and you just kind of ride it through, I suppose.

SI: How was morale on Leyte? Was it always high?

WS: … Yes, it seemed to me, as I recall, it was good. I don't recall [there] being any real morale problems.

SI: After Leyte, what kind of preparations were you making for Luzon?

WS: Just general, about the same as when we went to Leyte. We weren't sure exactly what was going to happen. It was going to be, we knew, a more intense battle than Leyte was, Leyte being completely jungle type thing, and, [on] Luzon, … the Japanese had so many thousands of troops there. We knew it was going to be more combat than it was in Leyte. They had a lot of troops in Leyte, too, but, after a couple of battles, they kind of dispersed all around to the jungles. A lot of them, I'm sure just starved to death, because they weren't able to be supplied like we were.

SI: Did you take any prisoners in Leyte?

WS: In Leyte, I just remember one and I wasn't really involved with it much, but, just one is all I remember, and I didn't have anything to do with interrogating him or anything.

SI: Was there anything you learned in Leyte that made you say, "Well, they did not teach us this in training," or, "We should have known this," or, "We will do this differently in the future?"

WS: Well, obviously, it was different for us in the artillery, because we were acting as infantrymen. [laughter] We weren't doing our job as artillery. My job, I was a forward observer for the artillery. I was always with the lead infantry company, but, since we didn't have the guns set up or anything, I wasn't with them. … We were with our own units. Part of the time, we were with infantry units, too. It was a combination, but I don't recall hardly any artillery firing in Leyte, because of the situation. So, as far as the answer to that question is concerned, it was completely different. We were infantrymen almost and didn't do what we were really trained to do, but, you know, it was something that was unusual, but it didn't seem that difficult to be able to do.

SI: It sounds as though when you were attacked, you could actually see the Japanese soldiers as it was happening.

WS: It was usually those *banzai* things. I was only in one *banzai* thing; it was at night, it was dark. So, there was a lot firing and, in the morning, we just saw a lot of dead Japanese. That was about the end of it.

SI: However, it was not like the average artillery experience, where you were further away from the action.

WS: No. It was right hand-to-hand like. They just charged the perimeter.

SI: How did you get to Luzon?

WS: We went to Luzon, I went up on a, I really don't know what type the ship was. It was like a small destroyer, I guess, and I was a forward observer. I was with one of the infantry companies and we didn't have too difficult a time landing. We didn't have a lot of casualties; we had a few, but not a lot, and, the first day we were there, a good friend of mine, who was also a lieutenant forward observer and was with my battalion, got hit right in the face with a mortar shell and he got evacuated and I got a radio call to take his place with that infantry company he

had been with, and so, I had a jeep and an instrument sergeant and a radio operator and another corporal, I guess, and so, we left the company I landed with and went over to this other infantry company, and they told me, on the radio, that the road was being shelled and that, you know, to be careful, that it was being shelled and that someone would stop me when I got to where I was [supposed to go]. They were all in the sides of the roads, you know, … so [that] I couldn't see them. So, they said, "Somebody'll stop you when you come down." So, I'm going along with the jeep and my men and I see a lot of dead soldiers in the road and we're trying to go around them and kept going until we came to a bridge and the bridge was out. … It had been demolished. So, I thought, "Well, nobody stopped me. I guess we have to go [on foot] from here." So, I said to the jeep driver, … "Well, you go back. We can't take the jeep any further." So, it was very quiet. It was really eerie and it just seemed to me that something was wrong. So, I said, "Well, let's set up the radio and we'll see what we can find out." So, we set up the radio and as soon as he plugged it in, they were saying, "FO4," that was my call signal, forward observer number four, "FO4, FO4, come back, you are in the Jap lines." [laughter] Boy, did we scoot out of there. We took the radio down. They stopped the jeep driver when he came back. We'd passed those guys; they never stopped us. He went back and they stopped him. They sent him back to get us, because they knew that we had set up the radio, and so, he's in the jeep, almost pumping it, waiting for us to jump in and get out of there, but, … apparently, the Japs had just evacuated that [area], like, maybe a half-hour, an hour before. I mean it was full of Japs. So, I mean, it was one of the things that I'll always be thankful for, that the timing was just such that we survived that, because it could have been a disaster. There were only five of us. … It was good to get back to our own people.

SI: In your normal duties, you were with the infantrymen. Were you always with the same group?

WS: No. … I don't know why I ever got into that, but we were always with the lead company, because we were the artillery observer for them and firing artillery. You know, if they came upon a pillbox or a machine gun nest or something and wanted artillery, we had to fire the artillery. So, we were with all different companies in either the 188th or 187th Infantry Battalions. So, we moved around from one to the other.

SI: What was your relationship like with the infantrymen?

WS: It was always good. They always … liked seeing us come, because they knew it was going to be a help to them to get some artillery fire in places, you know, and they were always pleased to have an artillery observer and his men. It was only five of us in the group, usually, but, whenever we came into a company, they were always, you know, glad to see us, because it was going to be helpful to them. As a matter-of-fact, just last week, I met a fellow in Cranford, at that antique car show, that had been in one of the infantry companies that I had been with during the war. … He's from Roselle Park. His name is Jim (Ruff?) and he was with the 188th.

JK: Did you know him?

WS: I did. I did know him. I'd visited him in base camp when we were down in McCall, but I just met him last week.

[TAPE PAUSED]

So, basically, what was happening in Luzon was, there was a landing by the First Cavalry and a couple of other divisions north of Manila and the 11th Airborne was landed in Nasugbu, I think it was, south of Manila, and we were supposed to proceed north to Manila and they were coming south, … like a pincer movement, because, of course, Manila was being held by thousands and thousands of Japanese. So, we just started to proceed north and there was a number of places where they were well dug in and trying to defend the main road to Manila and they were in mountainous areas and in caves and it was just amazing, some of the caves that we uncovered. You know, they'd be in … the middle of a mountain and … you couldn't possible take them out with aircraft or anything else, because they were just too far into the mountain, and there was one place that we had real difficulty in was Mount Macalad and we kept going up it and getting knocked back down and so forth, and, … probably, one of the most tragic days was, I was with the infantry company commander, and we were as close as you and I are, and we got over this little ridge on the mountain, and he put his head up and a machine gun opened up and killed him like that and he fell right back on me. Before we were finished that day, … not one infantry officer was left with that company. I was the artillery officer and I wasn't trained in infantry tactics so much, but every one of them had either been killed or wounded and that happened, like, you know, a few days after we'd hit Luzon, and it was, day after day, we kept trying to go up there, and, finally, we didn't knock them all out, but we pretty much made it so that the highway was passable and protected anybody that was going up with supplies and so forth, and then, we fought our way up to Nichols Field, … which was on the outskirts of Manila, and I can still recall being up on, like, a small hill; prior to that, there'd been quite a bit of fighting, but we won't get into that, but there was a pillbox on the edge of the field that we were going to try to take. We were looking down on it and I was firing our artillery on it and it was not doing anything. It was hitting it, but it wasn't damaging it at all. It was, apparently, a very well constructed pillbox. … Over the radio, my battalion headquarters asked if I wanted to fire .155-mm guns, which were coming from the north. I think they were with the … [First] Cav or one of those, I forget what other division was up there. So, I said, "Sure, let's try it." So, I got a real lucky shot, about the second or third shot, it just caved in an entrance, like right into the doorway, and all the infantry guys were screaming and hollering, "Yea," you know, so that was kind of like winning a ballgame or something and, you know, there were so many instances like that and things that happened that, if you try to enumerate them, it's tough and would be too lengthy, I think. … I think, maybe, the thing that might be the most gratifying and satisfying thing that happened in Luzon was the drop and the advancement on the internment camp where a bunch of civilian internees had been at Los Banos. I don't know whether you've ever heard of that, but there's a whole book out on it that one of the officers, who I knew and was with quite a while, had written, but there was a group of our people that went across; this internment camp was right on a lake, a big lake, I think it was Taal or something. One group went across on amphibious tractors and, at dawn of the same day, we had a parachute jump on the camp, and I was in a unit that was coming by road. It was supposed to be a pincer movement. … There were, supposedly, eight or ten thousand Japs right within a couple of miles of this camp. The idea was to get in there quickly and get all the internees out. There was, I think, 2,300 and some internees that had been in there for years, since the war started, and the jump was very successful, killed all the Japanese soldiers. It was done right at the time when they were doing

their calisthenics in the morning and we knew all this. We had this information from Filipino guerillas who gave us the timetable when their weapons were not with them. They were locked up. There were guards, of course, in the guardhouses and going around, but they were so surprised, they hardly knew what happened, and that's the way the division got the name of the Angels, the 11th Airborne Division was called the Angels, because these internees looked up and saw the parachutists coming down and said, "Oh, the angels," and it was a very successful mission, and it worked just perfectly, and we got every one of them out. None of the internees were killed and we had very few casualties. I didn't have a whole lot to do with it. I was in the ground unit that was coming into the internment camp and, by the time we got there, it was practically all over. So, we just turned around and went back, but it was one of the things [I remember], and it never got a lot of publicity, because it was the same day the flag was raised on Iwo Jima and that got all the publicity, and so, very few people really even know this, and it was one of the most successful raids, probably, during World War II.

JK: Were there any gliders involved?

WS: No, no, there wasn't any room for that, but it just was the perfect timetable. It worked perfectly and those internees were, you know, just like you see in the pictures of the ones in Europe where they were so thin and emaciated and so forth, you know. It was pathetic, but they all came out and, even to this day, there are reunions of people that were on that raid and even the internees come, sometimes, to the reunions.

SI: Before the actual mission, before you learned about it, was that something that was on people's minds, getting to the camps and freeing these people? Were you aware of it at all?

WS: No. It was, really, a very surprise mission. It was put together within just a few days and even the corps division general, apparently, knew very little about it and it was put together by our people in conjunction with what the guerillas had supplied to us on who was there, and how many Japs were in the area, and so forth. … It was a mission that couldn't have worked any better and it was only done within a few days. Manila wasn't even completely secured yet. We left Manila and went on that mission just to do it, and then, went back to Manila to continue the fight for Manila.

SI: How was fighting in a city different?

WS: A lot. Yes, it's a lot different, because, you know, you have to go down every street and I have to say, though, we got a lot of help from the Filipinos when we got to Luzon, in many ways. I mean, they gave us a lot of intelligence. They told us where the Jap units were and they had been treated very poorly. I mean, they really resented the Japanese and the Japanese looked down on them, too. They thought they were far superior to the Filipinos and we got a lot of very informative information from them and helpful. I can remember one little boy, [he] probably was, maybe, fourteen or fifteen, guiding us through an area, through, I guess they were called drain pipes, but they were, like, maybe six feet around, big, round drain pipes, and telling us, "This is the way we can go. We can go around here," and he stayed right with us. I mean, he wanted to be part of it. They were very, very good and thankful, of course, that we were there.

SI: Had you trained for anything like fighting in a city?

WS: Not really, basically, fighting in the city, no. I don't recall ever having anything like that as, really, training for it and the infantry, they may have been trained more for it than we in the artillery were.

SI: Besides Warsaw, Manila was the most devastated city in World War II.

WS: Oh, yes, it really was. I mean, … there was hardly a building left. I remember going through, I've taken some pictures, I have some pictures, … it was just devastated and not all by being taken by us, by artillery and things, but the Japs did their own part of just blowing up buildings and all that sort of thing, you know. Of course, it made it easier for them, too, to defended it when they had that kind of …

SI: Rubble?

WS: Yes.

SI: Were snipers and other harassment attacks frequent?

WS: Yes, there were snipers and, you know, the Japanese did such crazy things. I remember one way up on a water tower and I think there were two of them, originally, and they were firing down on us from that water tower, two of them. I mean, you know, there wasn't a chance that they were going to live through that. I mean, … I was with an infantry company and they just all fired up and those guys tumbled off the tower, but that's the way they fought.

SI: At this time, were you in correspondence with anybody at home, family and friends?

WS: Oh, yes. Well, not while we were in combat, you know; you didn't get a chance to write or anything then, but I wrote just as often as I could, and, of course, mail was the big thing for all of us. I was engaged to my wife and my mother and father and sister wrote all the time and my friends were in different units and mail was the big thing, the entertainment, and they were all very good about writing and I tried to write as often as possible. My mother saved all my letters. She left them for me, a whole box of them.

SI: In-between patrols and operations, what would you do to release stress? Were there any kinds of entertainment opportunities?

WS: If you were in a base camp, … you know, you've heard about all the entertainers that came and did things, like when we were in New Guinea. We didn't have anything, as I recall, in Leyte. In Luzon, we had a couple of them come. I remember, Jack Benny was there and so forth and we had movies. Occasionally, we'd have a movie, if we were in a base camp, and we played cards and, when we were in a base camp, where we had set up for tents and things like that, we had a Ping-Pong table and we tried to keep ourselves entertained as much as possible, shot crap. That's where I learned to shoot crap. [laughter]

SI: Was there a lot of gambling?

WS: Yes, but there wasn't a lot of money. [laughter] So, there was quite a bit of gambling, yes.

SI: What about drinking and smoking?

WS: There was a lot of smoking, almost everybody smoked, and you got cigarettes in your rations. I mean, they give you your rations and there was cigarettes in them. Everybody was smoking then, wasn't the no-no that it is now and it was a relaxer, I guess, for a lot of guys, you know, to smoke. To have a cigarette was just the thing you did. Of course, when you're in the field, you got ten-in-one rations or C rations or something like that. It was always just cold rations, but something to eat, and you enjoyed it as much as you could, even though it was pretty repetitive.

SI: In Europe, the soldiers had access to vineyards and all kinds of alcohol, but, in the Pacific, they used medicinal alcohol to make things. Was there any of that?

WS: There was. I don't recall a whole lot of it, but I remember, and the way this was done, it was something that'll probably never leave my memory, but, when we got to Manila, we were warned, and we warned our men, about drinking the liquor, because there was poison liquor, … but, you know, everybody doesn't heed a warning and two GIs came back to where our base camp was and were literally dying, because they drank poisoned liquor. Our battalion commander lined everybody up and walked them past them and said, "This is what happens." I mean, that was an example of, "We told you, here you are, now, don't do it." You know, it was pathetic, but it got the message across.

SI: Would you ever listen to Tokyo Rose?

WS: I never did hear it, no. No, I never did hear her. I guess some of the things that she said and the music, [laughter] the guys enjoyed the music, I guess, but I don't recall ever hearing her. I don't really remember having any radios that we got any kind of reception on at all, I mean, just our GI radios that we talked back and forth on for artillery people, but no civilian type radios. I don't remember any.

SI: Were you able to attend any religious services?

WS: Yes, yes, … they had religious services and the guys did attend it. You know, being close to your religion was a factor that helped calm you and so forth and the guys attended pretty regularly, when there was a service and, lots of times, there was no minister or a priest or whatever in the area, but, occasionally, you would get one and you'd go.

SI: In general, what did you think of the higher officers, from your division commander to Douglas MacArthur?

WS: Well, I thought very highly of our division people and, particularly, General Swing. I thought he was a fantastic commanding general and his staff, too, was good and, in general, I

have to say that, you know, I thought pretty highly of the people in our division, and General MacArthur, … you know, there was always a bunch of things about him being the actor [laughter] and all those sort of things. I guess we were part of that, too, but I think everyone had respect for him, because his general policy, and maybe we didn't even know it at the time, I'm sure we probably didn't, but, in reading about it and, you know, there's so many books on him and they're all interesting, but the way he island hopped and missed islands and just let the Japs starve to death, it saved a lot of casualties, I'm sure. I mean, he just took the main places that had to be taken, because you couldn't ever starve them out of places like the Philippines, but a lot of islands where they were, and there were a number of thousands of Japs on them, [he] just bypassed them, and that was his policy and it was a good one, I think.

SI: Did you work with any other forces, like Marines, Navy, Air Corps? How well did you work with them, if you did?

WS: We didn't work much with anybody. In New Guinea, we had some exposure to the Aussies, the Australian troops, not to fight with them, but, just, they were near us a couple of times and they seemed like a bunch of good guys, which they are. I found that out after the war. … Our company had some association with them and I got to know a lot of them, and not much with the Navy, other than when we were being transported somewhere, and the Marines, not at all. We ran into some Japanese Imperial Marines at one time, but they weren't friends. [laughter]

SI: In combat, was there a "take no prisoners" attitude?

WS: Pretty much. They didn't surrender anyway, not many of them. I mean, occasionally, you'd get a prisoner, but not much. I mean, they were prepared to fight to the death, most of them.

SI: You mentioned earlier that there were some cases of battle fatigue on Luzon. I have heard that the two main kinds of battle fatigue were, either you would not move forward or you would just go off on your own.

WS: Yes. Well, it was like that going up and down on Macalad every day and getting knocked back down. You know, you just get an attitude like, "Oh, Jesus, this so helpless," and, every day, you come down with less men and wounded men and everything, you know, and it gives you an attitude. I'm sure that some guys just go into what was known as battle fatigue.

SI: Did you work with medics and other medical personnel?

WS: Well, of course, the medics that were our medics, we worked closely with, because we had two officers that were doctors, two captains, and they were very good guys, and they started right with us when the division started up and went pretty much through. One of them didn't, I forget who replaced him, but the other one was with us through most of the campaign.

SI: In the field, you had this five-man forward observer unit

WS: That moved around from one unit to [the other], yes.

SI: If you or one of your men got hit, did you have a reasonable expectation that a medic would be along soon?

WS: Oh, yes, oh, yes. The infantry medics, for us, when we were with them, yes, they were very well trained, very good. …

JK: Can you tell us about the occupation of Japan? Luzon was coming to an end.

WS: Yes, that's pretty [much it], you know, there were a lot of things [that] happened there, but we've covered enough of the instances, I think, of what you guys wanted. So, well, one kind of unusual thing, I guess, happened on our way to Japan. A lot of the division flew up to Okinawa and staged for Japan on Okinawa. The war already had been over. Both atomic bombs had been dropped and the Japs had surrendered, so, we were to be MacArthur's honor guard, going into Japan, and a lot of them went up and were staged there for, I don't know, a week or ten days or something in Okinawa. The fighting in Okinawa was pretty much over by then and a number of people had to stay back and some were in the hospital and there were various details, … you know, cleaning up camps and all kinds of things, and I was left back to go up by ship. … We stayed a few days on Luzon, then, we got on a ship and I had about twenty men under me or maybe twenty-five men. I still have a list of them that were on the ship and, when we got on, one of the naval officers said to me that, in the morning, you have to take, I don't know what the Navy called it, but, roll call, or "turn to," or something, and so, my guys, in that we were the only paratroopers on the ship, were spread all over and put with different units, and the first day that we were at sea, I tried to take roll call and some of them were on KP and some of them were, you know, on other details and so forth. So, there really was kind of a mess to try to take it, and so, I said, "Where's anybody going to go? We're on a ship. We're in the middle of the China Sea. Why do I have to take roll call?" … So, I had a couple of master sergeants, so, I assigned it to one of the master sergeants and I said, "From now on, you take this and report to me … after you take the roll call." So, we're out about three days, I guess, and I'm standing at the rail of the ship, looking out with a Navy officer, his name is Bob Greeley, he was the grandson or great-grandson of Horace Greeley, "Go West young man, go West," and I just met him on the ship and we became friends and used to play cribbage together. So, we're standing there, just looking out at sea, and one of the Navy officers from the ship came down and said, "Are you in charge of the paratroopers on this ship?" and I said, "Yes," and he said, "The Captain wants to see you," and Greeley said to me, … "Gee, this is a big ship," he said, "if the Captain wants to see you, … something's up, something's wrong." So, I went and walked into … a big stateroom, with thick carpet, and there were about, maybe, four or five other Navy officers there and I reported to him, in the best military form I could think of, and … he asked me the same question. He said, "Are you in charge of the paratroopers on this ship?" and I said, "Yes." … He said, "Well, is Private So-and-So in your command?" and I said, "Well, frankly, these aren't men that are normally in my command, but … I have to look at my roster," I had it with me, and I said, "Yes," and he said, "Well, did you take roll call," or whatever, "this morning?" and I said, "No," and he said, "Weren't you told to?" and he started to get on me [laughter] and I said, "Yes, I assigned it to one of my master sergeants and he reports to me." … This is fairly early in the morning, it's, you know, like, maybe eight-thirty or something like that in the morning. He said, "Did he

report to you yet?" and I said, “No, not today," and he looked me right in the eye and he said, “Well, damn it, Lieutenant," he said, “this man jumped off the ship, was in the water and one of our destroyers picked him up this morning and we couldn’t even get him to get into the rescue boat. We had to send men in the water to get him." … Boy, I was amazed. I didn’t know what to think and he said, “When we get … into Tokyo Bay," he said, "you go over to the destroyer," he gave me the name of the destroyer, "and pick the man up and put him on a hospital ship." So, when we got there, they gave me a launch to go over to the destroyer and I did and I was talking to the skipper of the destroyer and I said, “What happened?" and he said, “Well, he jumped off ship and he was deranged. He said he wouldn’t come out of the water." He said, "I had to send men in. We threw preservers to him," and he said, "I had to lock him up when he got back on the ship." Well, he was one of the guys that was in the hospital when we left; he had started to go up to Okinawa by plane and the plane had crashed and he was, you know, all disoriented. He never should have left the hospital in Manila before we left.

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE----------

SI: Please, continue.

WS: So, it was just, you know, an unusual incidence of something that happens during wartime. So, I picked him up and took him over to a hospital ship and, hopefully, he was all right after that. I don't know whatever happened to him. … I was in [Tokyo] … Harbor the day of the signing. I could see the *Missouri* off in the distance. I knew what was going on there. There was a lot of action, but I wasn’t close enough to see anything firsthand, but we knew that that was a big day, and, after that, we went into land and we were starting to do all our demilitarizing of the area around Tokyo and Yokohama and that area, and I was sent to go to what was a military academy, to disarm anybody that was there, and this was in the first couple of days, and it was a little bit itchy about just how everything was going to go, but I found out that once the Emperor said, "That’s it, the war is over," and, you know, "You cooperate," boy, his word was just it. … I guess I had, maybe, seven or eight jeep loads of guys to go to the military [academy], to take whatever weapons were at this military academy. So, it was like a big field and I could see the barracks and everything. So, I stopped the jeeps and said to the guys, “Well, listen, we don’t know what’s going to go on. These are military guys, this isn’t a civilian thing. We'd better be very careful, you know. Load up, take your safety’s off and let’s be ready for whatever happens." So, we drive up and there's, like, two guardhouses with just a little area where they could stay in if it was inclement weather and the guard came out, … and there was a gate and we stopped, and they came out and they presented themselves, they bowed, they handed over their weapons, they handed over their swords, they opened the gate and we went through that with absolutely not one shot. … They laid down their arms and that was it and, to me, that was when the war ended. [laughter] That just showed that it was over to me, and then, I stayed in Japan for about three more weeks. We went up north of the Tokyo-Yokohama area to a place called Akita, and then, I was sent home, because I had a lot of points. I’d been overseas a long time, I’d been in the service a long time, so, I was one of the first ones to come back and I landed in California and came cross-country by train and was discharged at Fort Monmouth.

SI: For the few weeks that you were in Japan, it must have seemed strange, being such vicious enemies …

WS: It did. It was very strange and, yet, I didn't have one instance of where anybody got wounded or shot or even shot at. So, I don't know what happened with most of the others, but it seemed like the whole country just settled back, and we started going into caves and all kinds of places where they had just supplies of guns. If we had had to have a frontal assault on Japan, it just would have been [horrible]. Every man, woman and child would have fought and, it's the same way, they all just gave up and said, "Okay." I mean, if they were fighting for the Emperor, they all would have fought. They had shotguns and all kinds of stuff that was piled up, ready for an invasion.

JK: How was the civilian welcome of the occupational forces?

WS: Well, at first, they kind of hid. They didn't show themselves at all for the first few days. They were just like either in their houses or turning around, not looking, … like they didn't want anybody to see them and, you know, it was a little strange, but, after … time went on, then, they just seemed to start coming around, start doing their things and making life a little more normal for them, I guess.

JK: After Luzon was secured, can you tell us about the preparations you made? There was a time when you thought that there was going to be an invasion of the home islands

WS: Oh, yes. Well, … the Luzon battle just ended, I don't know how long in-between, let's see, I guess it ended sometime in, well, maybe May or something like that, and the first atomic bomb was dropped in August, I think, and, after the Battle of Luzon, we just went right back to training. We had gliders there and we had an airfield there and we were just training as we normally would and trying to train for what was going to happen in Japan and come to find out, you know, you can get things from the War College, … I don't think it's the War College, but someplace in Kansas City or St. Louis or something, … there's a paper on what the plans were for the invasion of Japan. We were to be one of the first forces into Japan and we probably wouldn't be having this interview if that had happened, because that would have just been a terrible calamity. We would have lost, you know, they're estimating a million men. So, the dropping of that atomic bomb, President Truman is one of my heroes. It was a very tragic thing for the Japanese, but it would have been a much more tragic thing for the US and the Allied forces, because we would have had other forces with us, too, then.

SI: When you first heard about the atomic bomb, did you realize what that meant at first?

WS: Not when the first one went off, I don't think. I don't think we realized just how devastating and how terrible it was. We knew it was bad. … I can remember the talk about the city being [leveled] and I can even remember having an officers' dinner the night or the second night after we knew about it and making what we called an "atomic bomb." We took all the liquor … anybody had and put it all into one big bowl, [laughter] threw in some fruit juices and we called it the atomic bomb and we said, "We have to drink it all tonight." [laughter] So, that happened.

SI: Was there any kind of celebration for V-J Day?

WS: Well, as I said, you know, when the signing was, we're in there, and … there's wasn't any celebration because we were going back to work to try to make sure everything was secure in the city and we weren't sure what was going to happen exactly, but, you know, as it turned out, it was very peaceful.

SI: After you were discharged from Fort Monmouth, you did not join the Reserves.

WS: No, they pushed the papers at me, I pushed them right back. [laughter] No, I didn't want any more. That was it.

SI: At that point, did you know about the GI Bill?

WS: Yes. It was just starting and we did know and that was the reason I went to college, because of that.

SI: Did you start going to college right away?

WS: … Let's see, I got out in January of '46 and I started, I guess, that fall and it took me seven years at night, three nights a week, four hours a night, usually, and I was working; … as a matter-of-fact, I had two kids and the third one on the way. When I graduated, my wife was pregnant with the third one.

SI: Where were you working?

WS: I was working at the time, yes, Rheem Manufacturing Company, I don't know whether you know them or not, but they make water heaters, air conditioners, and I was at the container division. They made steel and fiber containers.

SI: A few months ago, we interviewed another University College alumnus who was there before and during the war. He said that they made an effort to make it not just like a night school, but more like a regular college atmosphere? Did that still exist when you were there?

WS: I don't recall that. No, it was pretty much just go to class and get out. It didn't get much college life type thing, you know.

SI: No social events?

WS: Not much, no, because I was married, you know, and I had a lot of other things going. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Is there anything else that you would like to put on the record?

WS: Well, I just might put on the record that, at this point, I have a great family. I have three children of my own, two boys and a girl. I have seven grandchildren and five great-

grandchildren. So, I just wanted to have them included. [laughter] No, … as far as I'm concerned, if it's satisfactory to you guys, it's okay with me.

SI: Did you have any trouble readjusting to civilian life?

WS: Well, that sort of brings another story up, but it'll be short. [laughter] When I was in the service and, you know, having some difficulties and things, I said to myself, "If I ever get out of this alive and in one piece, I'm going to take a year off. I'm going to buy a convertible and I'm just going to enjoy myself." Well, I came home and … I got home, actually, [in] November, but I had terminal leave, so, I was paid until January sometime, and I did buy a convertible, … and I got married in November. I didn't go to work for about seven months or so, and my wife and I went over to her parents for dinner one night, and, by this time, they were getting a little worried that she'd married a bum, [laughter] of course. So, I happened, foolishly, to mention something to my father-in-law when my wife and her mother were in the kitchen that I saw a job in the paper that looked kind of interesting and he looked me in the eye and he said, "Well, Bill, you're not going to get it sitting there on your ass." [laughter] So, the next thing I knew, he had arranged an interview with me at Western Electric, where he worked, and, if I'd gone in there just a blithering idiot, I would have still gotten the job, because he had it all set up. So, that's where I started and I only stayed there about nine months or ten months or something. I left and went to Rheem Manufacturing Company. Now we can call it quits, if you want.

JK: I am just curious, what kind of a convertible did you get?

WS: I had a Chevy convertible, yellow with a black top, and one of the officers who … was in the service with me lived in Daytona, Florida, came up on a trip and called me on the phone. He said, "I'm in New Jersey. … I want to come see you," and I said, "Okay." I told him how to get there, it was out on [Route] 22, and I said, "Just keep going down there until you see a yellow convertible with a black top." He'd heard the story of me saying I was going to get that, you know, and the next thing out of his mouth was, "You son of B," he said, "are you working yet?" [laughter] I said, "No." He said, "You're doing it, aren't you?"

SI: Well, that is a good place to end. Thank you.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 6/18/04
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 6/24/04
Reviewed by William C. Schnorr 7/28/04